Mr. Average to Nixon: Consider resigning

by TONI GINNETTI

President Nixon should consider resigning before the House of Representatives considers an impeachment vote, but if he does not, he should be impeached.

That is the course of action the technologically-chosen representative of the average American thinks should prevail in the final chapters of the Watergate saga now unfolding in Washington.

Richard Johnson of Rolling Meadows, selected by national computers in 1972 as typical of the average American, said this week he would not like to see the President impeached, but if the evidence would support the move and Mr. Nixon refused to step aside on his own, impeachment should take place.

"AS FAR AS I'm concerned, if the man has worked himself into such a position that the evidence is overwhelmingly one-sided, then he should be impeached, though I would hate to see anyone impeached," Mr. Average American said.

"I would want to see him resign before being impeached, but if the Judiciary Committee goes forward with this and the evidence is there, then I say let justice have the upper hand."

Johnson's view of the Presidency, and particularly the Nixon Administration, has surfaced in the public eye ever since he was selected as typical of the average middle-class American and became the subject of two television documentaries for the National Public Affairs Center for Television in Washington.

One of the documentaries focused on Johnson's opinions about a behind-the-scenes view of a presidential campaign as he stumped the country for one week with the George McGovern team.

Johnson, a traditionally Democratic voter in presidential races, mirrored the acts of millions of other traditionally Democratic voters when he crossed party lines to vote Republican for the first time. Johnson's pattern was symbolic of the 1972 trend which resulted in a landslide victory for Mr. Nixon.

SINCE THEN, however, the Watergate affair has changed Johnson's opinions, as it has the majority of Americans, according to national opinion polls.

"I would think that the man would be realistic enough to realize that (impeachment) would cause a lot more grief, not just to himself but to his family and associates," Johnson said of the President. "This position of protecting the presidency is wrong."

The President's decision to turn over some 64 tape recordings in compliance with a unanimous Supreme Court decision this week is a wise move in Johnson's opinion, but the refusal to release the tapes prior to now only further implicates the President, he says.

"I think there is more to it. I've said all along that to me, by holding the tapes it indicates he's trying to hide something."

Johnson says he has no particular opinions about Vice President Gerald Ford should he assume the presidency but adds, "I don't think the country would be in any worse hands than with Nixon.

"I would just as soon see Ford as this other guy, what was his name? Oh yes, Agnew," Johnson added when he was reminded of the former Vice President's name. "Here's another character who was involved in things."

WHETHER THE President is impeached or resigns, Johnson thinks the Watergate affair will have a detrimental effect on the Republican Party both in the upcoming Congressional elections in November and in the 1976 Presidential year.

"I think it's going to reflect in a lot of people's thinking," he says. "I'm not saying a Democratic candidate will be a shoo-in, but a lot of people who crossed party lines to vote for him (Mr. Nixon) two years ago will probably think twice about doing it again. And I know I'm one of those characters because 1972 was the first time I ever voted Republican.

"And it will have a direct effect on the elections coming up, too. It shouldn't be that way, but that's the way people are."

Richard Johnson